

## Rep. Eshoo: "We are Keeping Our Promise to the American People"

November 7, 2009

Before the  
vote on passage of healthcare reform, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-Palo Alto) issued  
the following statement on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives:

"Madame Speaker, I come to the floor today to cast one of the  
most important votes of my congressional career--a vote in support of H.R. 3962,  
the Affordable  
Health Care for America Act.

"We are on the threshold of history that has been almost a  
century in the making.

"The promise of America as a land of equality and  
opportunity that embraces and cares for all of its citizens is but an empty  
promise without the guarantee of healthcare and the freedom from financial  
devastation resulting from illness.

"For so many of us, this long battle has had a singular, courageous  
champion who has fought like a lion for the sick, the elderly, the left behind  
and the left out. Our great achievement  
today will also be our greatest memorial to our friend, mentor and inspiration,  
Senator Edward Kennedy.

"Like Senator Kennedy, many of  
us wondered - as the decades marched by - whether our efforts for comprehensive  
healthcare reform would ever be successful.

"His unwavering commitment to decent healthcare for all  
Americans has paved the way for the bill before us today. It is on the  
shoulders of this giant that we stand and I pledge my vote as a tribute to the  
late Senator.

"At the heart of this legislation is one simple,  
indisputable idea: Everyone deserves health insurance they can afford.

"Our system is broken.  
In a nation where health is a daily value and where health care is the  
finest in the world, I hear daily from constituents who cannot afford to take  
care of themselves or their families, who are driven out of the system by

skyrocketing premiums, who live under the threat of a shuttered business or a bankrupted household, or who simply have to roll the dice and hope they will get better - or not too much worse.

"Perhaps most tragically, our current system turns its back on those most in need - those with a pre-existing condition.  
Health insurance is meaningless if it's only available to the healthy.

"H.R. 3926 will cover 96 percent of all Americans.

"It prohibits discrimination based on pre-existing conditions.

"It eliminates lifetime caps-immediately.

"It includes a non-profit public insurance option designed to increase competition and lower prices.

"It provides affordability credits to lower-income Americans to help them pay for coverage.

"It modernizes and strengthens Medicare, ensuring the program's continued solvency and eliminating the prescription "donut-hole."

"And, very importantly, it is budget neutral.

"When I return to my constituents in California, I'll be proud to tell them that with this bill:

- Employer-based health coverage will improve for 461,000 men, women and children who live in my District
- 84,000 households in my District will receive affordability credits to help them pay for coverage they otherwise couldn't afford
- 9,500 of the seniors in my District will no longer fall victim to the prescription drug "donut-hole"
- 17,100 small businesses in my District will be able to obtain affordable healthcare coverage
- And that 15,400 people will qualify for tax credits that will help reduce their health insurance costs.

"I'm also proud that I joined with Senator Kennedy to author an amendment to H.R. 3962, to create an FDA pathway for the approval of biosimilar drugs.

"Biotechnology is a complex and emerging field that can harness the power to cure cancer, AIDS, and diabetes, and prevent the onset of deadly and debilitating diseases such as Alzheimer's, heart disease, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis and arthritis.

"My amendment will save the government \$6 billion over the next ten years while continuing to foster innovation and new advancements.

"After President Obama signs this bill, millions of Americans who today have no health insurance will have it. Patients who are now denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition will no longer be shut out of the system. Millions more seniors will be able to afford their medications, and the average American family will pay less for their health coverage.

"Most importantly, we will be keeping our promise to the American people that they will have affordable health insurance which they cannot lose or have taken away from them if they become ill.

"I look forward to passing this landmark piece of legislation and seeing it signed into law by the President."

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